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SUBJECT: CZECH THINKING ON UPCOMING EU PRESIDENCY - PART II

REF: A. CARNIE-LUCAS E-MAIL DATED 6/19/2008

[1](#)B. 07 PRAGUE 1151

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On June 12-13 State EUR/ERA Office Director Bill Lucas met with a variety of Czech officials preparing for the January 2009 Czech EU Presidency. Czech officials covered the waterfront - from their very broad vision of what they hope to accomplish by next June, to the specifics of how to finalize dates for key U.S.-EU meetings. End Summary.

Czechs Condense Priorities

[1](#)2. (SBU) In the fall of 2007, the Czechs published their priorities for the EU Presidency, "Europe Without Barriers," which highlights the Czech commitment to press for a freer movement of persons and services and address EU bureaucratic impediments to progress in these areas. The five stated Czech priorities fall under the categories - Competitiveness of the EU, Energy Security and Sustainability, Reform of the EU Budget, Foreign Policy, and EU Third Pillar (Justice and Security) issues. The Czechs have begun now to narrow their focus at the urging of Prime Minister Topolanek, who wants the GOCR to take on issues where concrete results are achievable. Thus, the Czechs are winnowing these down and they are likely to settle on two or three key priorities. Mr. Marek Mora, Deputy to the Deputy Czech Prime Minister, indicated to Lucas that the Czechs are quite keen to advance Energy Security and Sustainability as well as Competitiveness of the EU. Foreign Policy, particularly the three subsections of transatlantic relations (listed first), the Balkans and the European Neighborhood Policy, cannot be left behind, however, which makes it very likely that the Czechs will settle on three overarching priorities rather than simply two as the Prime Minister would prefer.

Czech Interest in Cooperating with USG

[1](#)3. (SBU) Given our strong bilateral relationship, the Czechs are interested in working with the USG in several areas. Czech MFA Department of the Americas Director, Katerina Fialkova, suggested that our goals for transatlantic relations should be "ambitious, but realistic" with a focus on continuity. She also proposed that similar to the Slovenes, it would be useful to use the model of three baskets. In the first, she highlighted regional and security issues (transatlantic relations, Balkans, ENP, while Lucas added Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East). In the second basket she put economic issues (TEC and investment dialogue) and in the third basket she highlighted global issues (climate change/energy security while Lucas added human rights, and ESDP).

[1](#)4. (SBU) The issue of human rights cooperation also came up with Mora who noted Czech interest in advancing this particularly in relation to Burma, Cuba and Belarus. On the

topic of energy security, Mora noted that the Czechs are exploring the possibility of perhaps hosting a conference or an expanded discussion (to perhaps include the U.S. and or Central Asian countries as well as energy suppliers) with the EU Energy Ministers in Prague in February. They hope to significantly advance this topic prior to the December 2009 energy conference in Copenhagen. On Foreign Policy items, the Czechs would like to work closely with us on the Balkans, which they refer to as "our common child," as well as the "Eastern Neighborhood." In a later conversation with Director Vaclav Balek of the MFA Department of EU Common Foreign and Security Policy Director, Balek highlighted that the Czechs really hope to press forward on accession for Croatia and the opening of talks with Macedonia. In conversations with both Mora and Balek, Lucas also referenced USG interest in keeping our joint efforts in Afghanistan front and center.

TEC - Getting Beyond Chicken

15. (SBU) Czech Director of European Policy Coordination within the Deputy Prime Minister's Office, Michal Sedlacek, highlighted Czech disappointment with the interaction so far at the Transatlantic Economic Council, and he was interested in hearing our thoughts on how U.S. and EU engagement could be structured to make the TEC more productive. Lucas offered to provide a paper on USG thinking related to the TEC; Lucas also noted that while the EU committed in October 2007 to dealing with the lack of access to the EU poultry market, the EU has yet to do so. The safety of U.S. poultry processing with chemicals, according to several of our Czech interlocutors, is a very "political," as opposed to "scientific" issue. They were skeptical that this would be

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easily resolved, given that several EU member states "are very entrenched" in their opposition.

Czechs Float Ideas - Schedule, Summits, Visits, and Structured Dialogue

16. (SBU) Summits and Trips: Sedlacek highlighted the benefits of having the new U.S. President visit Europe as one of his very first trips abroad, and if this is done, the Czechs would want this visit to include Prague, since they will hold the EU Presidency. Besides the Summit with the U.S. during the Czech Presidency (the Czechs expect this will be in the U.S., and they are planning for June), there are plans for Summits with Japan and Canada, and an interest in perhaps hosting some major conferences as well. Balek noted that the EU is looking to enhance EU-Israel relations. Depending on how the internal EU discussions develop in this area, the EU may even upgrade relations to include a Summit next spring.

17. (SBU) Structured Dialogue at GAERC: As one intriguing idea, the Czechs expressed an interest in perhaps having a structured dialogue with the USG at several of the GAERCs, which would theoretically allow all of us to better prepare for our Summit in June. The idea would be to perhaps discuss Security at the March GAERC, Economics in April, and Global Issues in May. This is clearly only a fledgling idea of the Czechs, that they appear not to have fully worked through internally, nor with their EU member state counterparts. Nonetheless, it is an idea which demonstrates that the Czechs are thinking creatively and that they are seeking new ways to engage closely with us.

18. (SBU) Scheduling: Czech MFA Department of the Americas Director Katerina Fialkova flagged Czech interest in working closely with us to schedule U.S.-EU meetings, noting that they have already penciled in the Political Directors meeting for January 8 or 9. She offered to provide a copy of the Czech preliminary schedule of meetings with the U.S., which post has now shared with Washington (ref A).

Lisbon Treaty Implementation Issues

¶9. (SBU) At the time of Lucas's meetings with Czech officials, the Irish referendum results were not known. The Czechs, however, have been preparing to move forward with their EU Presidency under either condition - with, or without, the Lisbon Treaty in place. Czech interlocutors flagged for Lucas their interest in making sure that Czech PM Topolánek has a substantive role to play during this, the very first Czech EU Presidency. With respect to implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, the Czechs stated that they have engaged their French and Swedish counterparts regarding the EU common program, but many aspects of the treaty appeared to them unlikely to fall into place until the treaty ratification process was further along. (Note: In a subsequent conversation on June 19 with officials in Deputy Prime Minister Vondra's office, the Czechs stated that they consider this process to be at a standstill for the moment. They also referenced the comments of Commission President Barroso that this issue will be discussed at the next EU Council meeting scheduled for October 2008. End Note.)

¶10. (SBU) Comment: The Czechs officials that we met with are all quite enthusiastically preparing for their upcoming EU Presidency which commences in six months. Since this is the very first time they will assume the EU Presidency, they are quite eager to make this a success, including by closely cooperating with the United States. We have an opportunity here to begin shaping the U.S.-EU agenda under their presidency early. We believe the Czechs will be responsive to our ideas, such as the promised paper on TEC. We should also ensure that we use the first session of the U.S.-Czech Strategic Dialogue, scheduled for September 4, to tee up some of the priority issues for their presidency.

¶11. (U) Please Note EUR/ERA Director William Lucas did not have a chance to clear this prior to post's transmission.
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